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THE Unexplained

MYSTERIES OF MIND SPACE & TIME

96

Borley in ruins?
British scareships
Murder and the Moon
The art of geomancy
The healing touch

Aus & NZ$1.75 SAR1.75 IR75p US$1.50

THE Unexplained
MYSTERIES OF MIND SPACE & TIME

Published weekly by Orbis Publishing Limited
Orbis House, 20/22 Bedfordbury, London WC2N 4BT

Volume 8 Issue 96

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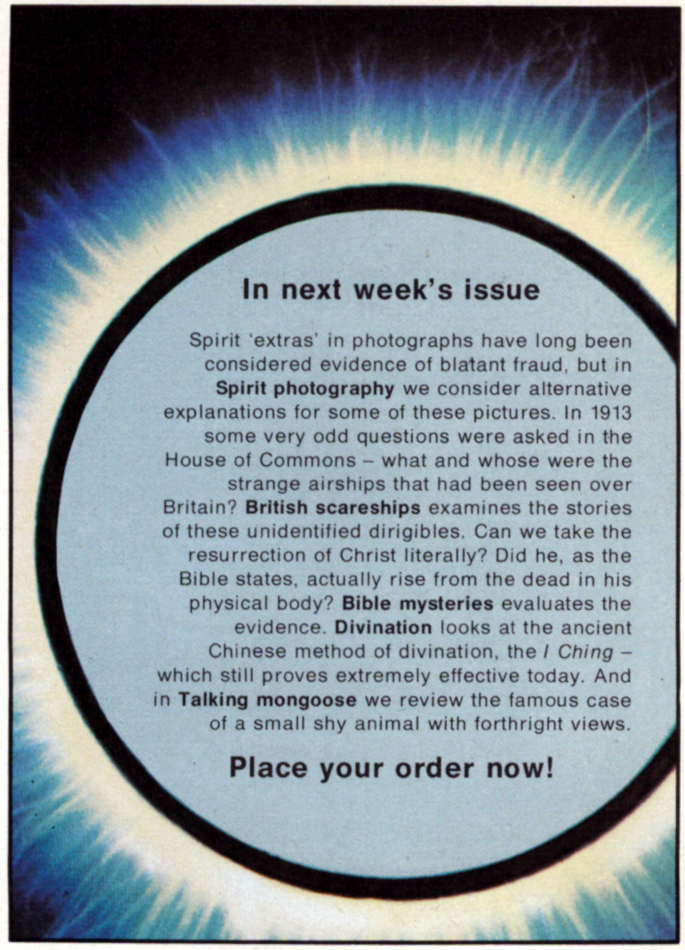

The Unexplained U.K. 60p. I.R. 75p. Aus. & N.Z. $1.75. S.A. R1.75. U.S.A. $1.50.
How to obtain copies of The Unexplained Copies are obtained by placing a regular order at your newsagent, or by taking out a subscription.
Subscription Rates
For six months (26 issues) £17.60, for one year (52 issues) £35.20. Send your order and remittance to The Unexplained Subscriptions, Punch Subscription Services, Watling Street, Bletchley, Milton Keynes, Bucks MK2 2BW, being sure to state the number of the first issue required.
Back numbers
U.K. & Eire: Back Nos are obtainable at cover price from your newsagent or from The Unexplained Back Nos. Orbis Publishing Ltd, 20/22 Bedfordbury, London WC2N 4BT – post free.
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Malta: Binders are obtainable by ordering from your local newsagent price £3.25. In case of difficulty write to The Unexplained Binders, Miller Ltd, PO Box 272, 18a Scots Street, Valletta.

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The pattern of the future

How does one distinguish between prediction and prophecy? Can the concept of free will accommodate predestination? BRIAN INNES takes a look at the principal methods of divination, and begins with the ancient, but still flourishing, art of geomancy

'How now, you secret, black, and midnight hags!' Macbeth and Banquo encounter the Weird Sisters on a heath near Forres. The witches' prophecies were to change Macbeth's life, but they predicted nothing that did not remain in his control

THROUGHOUT THE HISTORY of mankind, those who were concerned about what the future held for them have sought guidance from 'wise' men and women. From the Azande tribesman who offers a chicken to the witch doctor in return for a prognostication of next month's weather, to the investor consulting his astrologer for assistance in forecasting future movements of the stock market, the motives, the means and the advice have always been very similar. But for all those prepared to *prophesy*, few would be prepared to say that they could *predict*.

The dangers inherent in placing too exact an interpretation on prophecy are exemplified very neatly in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. Macbeth has – as the historian A.L. Rowse very rightly puts it – 'a flawed and ruined nobility – he is the victim of the Weird Sisters' prophecies; or, rather, of the promptings to which their "prophecies" gave confirmation.' In other words, Macbeth is given information that he interprets in one way; but subsequent events show that an entirely different, and equally plausible, interpretation could have been made.

When Macbeth first meets the witches, they hail him as thane of Cawdor, and as 'Macbeth, that shalt be king hereafter'. They also greet Banquo:

First Witch: Lesser than Macbeth, and greater.

Second Witch: Not so happy, yet much happier.

Third Witch: Thou shalt get kings, though thou be none. . . .

Within minutes, Macbeth is named thane of Cawdor, and so, driven by ambition and the conviction that the witches have foretold his future, he murders King Duncan and himself becomes king of Scotland. Then, fearing that the rest of the witches' prophecy will also come true, he engineers the murder of Banquo – but Banquo's son Fleance escapes, and will sire a line of later kings.

But Macbeth must have more:
I will tomorrow,
And betimes I will, to the weird sisters:
More shall they speak; for now I am bent to know,
By the worst means, the worst.

The witches are only too happy to give Macbeth what he asks. They conjure up a succession of apparitions, who advise:

1. Beware Macduff.
2. None of woman born shall harm Macbeth.
3. Macbeth shall never be vanquished until Birnam wood comes to Dunsinane.
4. A line of kings shall follow Banquo's death.

Since he can do nothing about the last

prophecy, Macbeth determines to deal with the first. Learning that Macduff has already fled to England, he puts Lady Macduff and all her family to the sword. But he is greatly heartened by the other two prophecies, for they seem to imply clearly that no one shall harm him, and that he shall not be vanquished.

In the last scenes of the play, however, he discovers that the witches' words have another meaning. Birnam wood does indeed come to Dunsinane, for Malcolm's army wears its leafy branches as camouflage; and Macduff, who finally kills Macbeth, was not *born* of woman, but 'from his mother's womb untimely ripp'd' – that is, he was born by Caesarean section.

An inescapable fate?

Prophecy is the outcome of divination, and the example of Macbeth, and the advice given him by the witches, should serve to make clear the difference between divination and prediction. What the witches foretold was *not* predetermined: if Malcolm's men had not hidden behind leafy branches from Birnam wood, if Macduff had not returned from England to avenge the murder of his family, then Macbeth might well have lived out his reign and died in his own bed.

Indeed, Macbeth failed principally because of the psychological effect of the prophecies upon his self-confidence. The weird sisters did not make any specific predictions: they made only negative statements: 'None of woman born shall harm Macbeth. . .' and 'Macbeth shall never vanquished be until. . .'. They did not say that someone who was not born of woman *would* harm Macbeth; but the effect of their prophecy was that Macbeth's confidence was raised so high that, when he discovered that Macduff was not 'of woman born', he was immediately destroyed by his own guilt and superstitious fear.

If, then, divination is not prediction and is not concerned with predetermined events, what use is it? Why go to a fortune-teller with your problems, if a newspaper 'agony aunt' or even a close friend can provide you with a wealth of good advice? The reason, quite simply, is that the diviner does not make use of information that he or she consciously possesses about the person making the consultation: by the use of some means – whether it is the entrails of a freshly killed animal, arbitrarily chosen objects, a crystal ball, the astrological birth-chart of the subject or certain marks, such as moles, upon his person – the diviner is put in touch with information that is obtainable only by transcendental methods.

To those for whom a belief in the free will of the individual is paramount, the idea of a predetermined future is totally unacceptable. But look at it in this way. Someone's birth can be compared to the launching of a space vehicle. At the moment of 'lift-off', all the conditions are known and understood by mission control: the rocket will follow a predetermined trajectory, and at a known time the vehicle will be detached and will follow a predetermined course. The astronaut need do nothing thereafter; he can leave the future manoeuvring of the vehicle to those on Earth. But he is also provided with manual controls that he can use himself; he may become bored and start tinkering with fine adjustments in flight that produce results he did not expect; or, in a fit of rage – or other show of temperament – he may throw himself about the capsule and disturb its equilibrium. Whatever he does, *of his own free will*, will be recorded by mission control; and they can immediately inform him what will be the outcome of his actions, however unplanned.

They can, however, only advise. If he persists in what he is doing he may miss his target and disappear for ever in the depths of space, and nothing that anybody on Earth can do will help him.

This is how divination works. The diviner can give advice on the basis of information that is not available to his subject; he can predict the outcome of a particular course of action and suggest an alternative; but he cannot state that any future event will definitely occur.

All divination, by whatever method, follows the same sequence:

First, a question is formulated. This may range from something very specific – such as 'Will I win today's lottery?' or 'Should I marry this man?' – to general enquiries of the form 'What will my future life be like?' Obviously, the more specific the question, the more specific the answer is likely to be – and, therefore, the more trustworthy it is for the enquirer. Generalised questions usually attract answers that are susceptible of many different interpretations.

Next, some physical means is employed to

Below: a geomancer practises his art. Reading meaning into randomly generated patterns remains popular. In the West, tea leaves are read, in other cultures the throwing of inscribed tablets – similar to the throwing of dice – is a common method of divination (divining tablets from Mashonaland, Zimbabwe, right). The belief persists that a specially gifted person – shaman, witch doctor or fortune teller (a Vietnamese stick thrower, below right) – is needed to practise divination, but it seems that almost anyone can

Left: the life of an individual can be compared to a space mission. Its purpose is known to mission control, who can – and do – manoeuvre the spacecraft from the Earth. Yet the crew could depart from the prearranged programme. Mission control could advise the crew not to, and they could still take no notice. Similarly, *we* have free will; divination can only advise us; it does not actually determine the future of our lives

provide a link between the enquirer and the diviner. The enquirer may be asked to provide an intimate possession, to touch something belonging to the diviner, or to make an arbitrary choice of cards from a pack, objects thrown to the ground, or any random arrangement of things from which he does not make a conscious selection. Or the diviner may employ some device, such as a crystal ball or a pendulum, on which he can concentrate so intensely that consciousness of his surroundings recedes to a point where he is effectively in a trance. Drugs may also be used for this purpose.

Skill – or cunning?

Then, avoiding any temptation to make use of knowledge he may consciously possess about the enquirer, or to reason logically from one premise to another, the diviner *intuitively* produces his 'message'. Depending upon his skill – or cunning – this message may be straightforward advice of a practical nature, or a succession of cryptic statements that only the enquirer can interpret for himself. Frequently, as innumerable tales throughout history have told us, this advice can appear so obscure that the enquirer despairs of it; on occasion, diviners have been killed by their clients in an agony of frustration.

The methods of divination have their own archaic names, from abacomancy – divination from patterns of dust – to zoomancy – the observation of the behaviour of animals. There are, however, five methods of divination that have particularly attracted the attention of practitioners over the centuries, and that have therefore gathered about them a vast amount of literature and working tradition. These are astrology (see page 561), cartomancy, cheiromancy, geomancy, and the Chinese method of divination known as the *I Ching*.

Although astrology has claimed to be the oldest of these, there is little doubt that geomancy is as old – and it is certainly the simplest. In this context, geomancy got its name from the practice of making a pattern of holes in the earth, and should not be confused with the Chinese practice of *feng-shui*, which is concerned with finding propitious places on which to erect tombs, build houses or found cities.

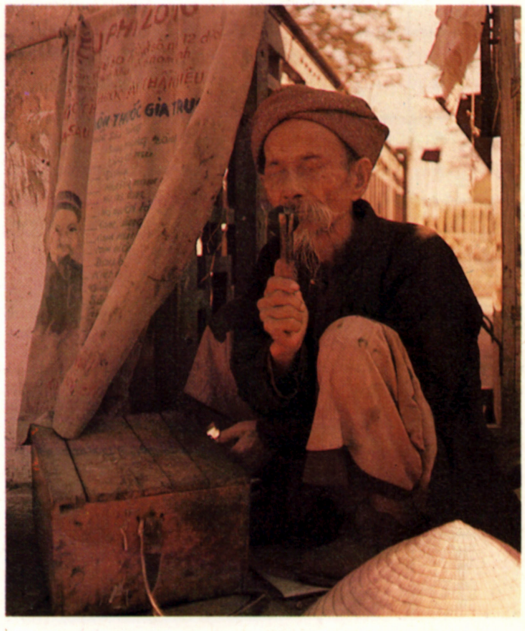
Geomancy, in fact, may be the surviving ancestor of the *I Ching*: the divinatory figures of geomancy are made up of four lines, and those of the *I Ching* of six. Since each line can take one of two forms, the total number of combinations in geomancy is only 16, compared with the 64 of the *I Ching*.

The lines may be marked in the dust or earth – which is how the art of geomancy got its name; or they may be made up of kernels or stones; or they may of course be marked on paper.

The art is said to have originated in Persia, but it is widespread over the whole of the Mediterranean region, the near East and much of Africa, and since its spread over this area followed the spread of Islam it is at least possible that Arab traders had brought it from China. In Malagasy, geomancy is known as *sikidi*; on the west coast of Africa as *djabe* or *fa*. In Europe, the first full description occurs in the second book of the *Occult philosophy* of Cornelius Agrippa (1531).

The right lines

The 'lines' from which the geomantic figure is derived can be obtained in a wide variety of ways. They may be straight horizontal lines traced – randomly and without conscious direction – in the dust, which are distinguished as short or long lines; or they may be either straight or wavy. These two classes of line are then identified as 'odd' or 'even', and are represented conventionally by either one or two stones, palm kernels or dots. Or the lines may be made up of a random succession of dots, the oddness or evenness being determined by the number of dots. In



fa, a handful of 18 palm kernels is passed from the left to the right hand, and the number of kernels remaining in the left hand is counted as either odd or even.

To make a geomantic figure, four lines are required. If, for instance, the first and third are even, and the second and fourth odd, the resultant figure will be:

Altogether, there are 16 of these figures, each with its own name and significance, as detailed in the accompanying table.

Below: how the geomantic figures are traditionally interpreted in the four main methods – the European, which uses Latin designations; the two West African systems of *fa* and *djabe*; and the *sikidi* of Malagasy

The meaning of the figures

Figure	Latin name	Fa	Djabe	Sikidi
	Puer Yellow; rash, inconsiderate	**Lete** Abscess	**Kaoussadji** Long Life	**Alakarabo** Leads to danger
	Amissio Loss	**Tche** Pearl	**Marili** Sickness	**Adalo** Tears; protection against enemies
	Albus White; wisdom	**Touloukpin** Unripe papaya fruit	**Baiala** Family	**Alohomora** Favourable to thieves
	Populus The crowd	**Yekou** Spirits of the dead	**Djamaha** The crowd	**Asombola** Plenty
	Fortuna major Good luck	**Houolin** Pointed shell	**Adouhi** Victory over an enemy	**Adabaray** Fire
	Conjunctio Joining together	**Holi** Removal of an obstacle	**Dam'hi** Success	**Alatsimay** Protects thieves and enemies
	Puella Girl; pretty face	**Toula** A firing gun	**Nagiha** Soon	**Alikisy** Good fortune in love; riches
	Rubeus Red; passion, vice	**Ka** Canoe	**Oumra** Marriage	**Alabiavo** Riches, jewels
	Aquisitio Success, gains, good fortune	**Fou** Blowing the fire	**Kali** Good fortune on the right; bad on the left	**Alihotsy** Lightness of spirit
	Carcer Prison, delay, confinement	**Di** Resistance	**Sikaf** Law, command	**Akikola** Protects vagabonds
	Tristitia Sorrow, melancholy	**Aklan** Porous stone	**Mankuss** Death	**Betsivongo** Obsession, tears
	Laetitia Joy, health, beauty	**Abla** Connection	**Laila** Riches	**Alahijana** Strength; happy marriage
	Cauda Draconis Exit, lower kingdom	**Gouda** Evil gods	**Sahili or Haridja** Serious intentions	**Karija** Fate
	Caput Draconis Entrance, upper kingdom	**Sa** Between the thighs	**Raia** Health	**Alakaosy** Evil fate, disputes, war
	Fortuna Minor Less good fortune; external aid	**Losso** Riven tree	**Sapari** Journeys	**Soralahy** Pride, domination
	Via The way, journeys	**Gbe** Language	**Dariki** Children	**Taraiky** Loneliness; death

In Africa, these figures are interpreted singly, or in pairs. In the European tradition, the procedure is more complicated. In the first operation 16 lines are produced, and these are used to generate four 'Mother' figures. Suppose for example that the four following Mothers are produced:

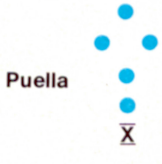
These are respectively: Fortuna Minor, Populus, Puer and Conjunctio.

From these four Mothers four Daughters are produced, by adding the four lines horizontally, from right to left:

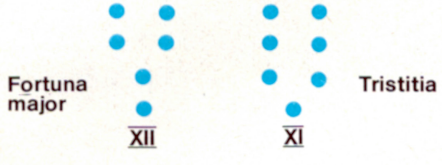
These are, respectively, Amissio, Puella, Tristitia and Albus.

Now four Nephews must be produced. The first Nephew is obtained by adding *together* the first and second Mothers, and marking the sum as before, with one dot for odd and two dots for even. So, from the first two Mothers, we get:

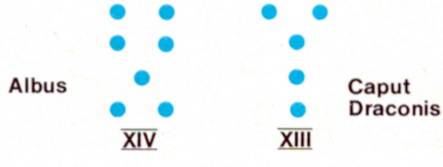
And from the second two Mothers:



Similarly the third and fourth Nephews are formed by adding together the first and second, and the third and fourth, Daughters:



From the Nephews, two Witnesses are obtained by the same process of adding together:



And finally, a Judge is obtained by adding together the lines of the two Witnesses:

The final pattern of 15 geomantic figures will provide the answer to one of 16 questions:

1. Will he have a long life?
2. Will he become rich?
3. Should he undertake the project?
4. How will the undertaking end?
5. Is the expected child a boy or a girl?
6. Are the servants honest?
7. Will the patient soon recover?
8. Will the lover be successful?
9. Will the inheritance be obtained?
10. Will the lawsuit be won?
11. Will he obtain employment?
12. How will he die?
13. Will the expected letter arrive?
14. Will the journey be successful?
15. Will good news arrive soon?
16. Will the adversary be overcome?

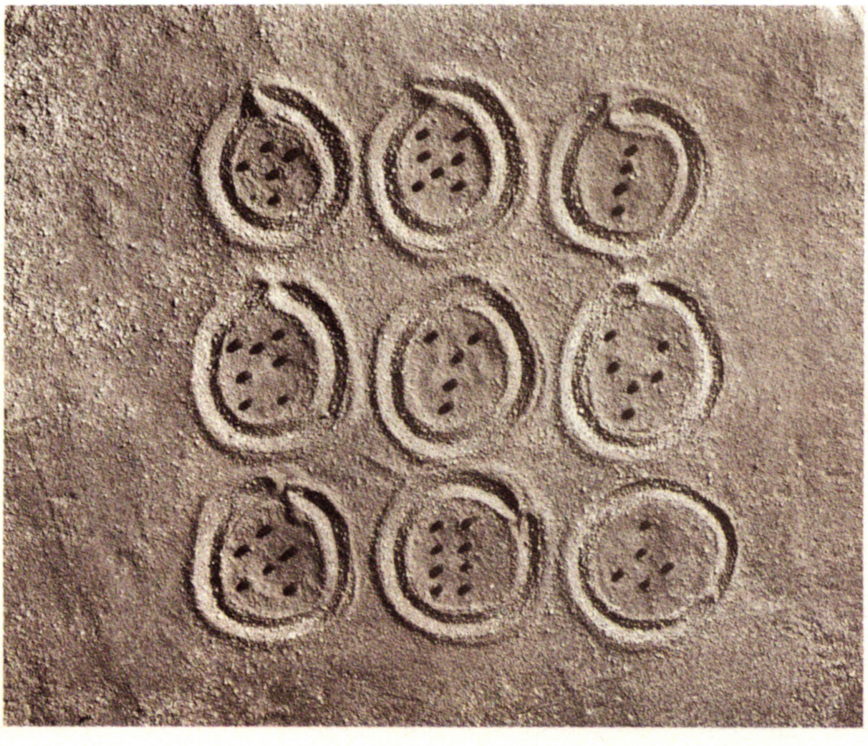
It can be seen that these questions cover most common preoccupations; with experience, the analysis of the geomantic pattern can be applied to other, rather more specific questions.

How are the figures interpreted, and how is the question answered? Let us suppose that the example above was obtained in answer to the question 'Will the lawsuit be won?'

In this case the Judge is Acquisitio, which signifies success, and the two Witnesses are Caput Draconis and Albus. These are all fortunate omens, and the implication is that wisdom will prevail and the lawsuit will be won with honour. We can investigate the progress of the lawsuit by considering the pattern of figures from the beginning. The outcome of the suit depends upon others (Fortuna Minor), whom we may suppose are the jury (Populus), likely to behave capriciously (Puer), but finally reaching a common verdict (Conjunctio). Perhaps the possibility of losing the suit (Amissio) is concerned with a girl (Puella), who can be the cause of sorrow (Tristitia) unless wisdom (Albus) prevails. The representative (Fortuna Minor) of the girl (Puella) could be a danger (Tristitia), but good fortune (Fortuna Major) will be the final outcome.

Right: a South African witch doctor casts and reads the 'wise stones'

Below: on the west coast of Africa, in the geomantic method known as *fa*, palm kernels are passed from hand to hand for a few moments. Those that end up in the left hand are counted and the geomantic figures are then formed from them



Open to interpretation

Geomancy is the most primitive of all the methods of divination, but this example shows clearly how adaptable it is as a means of interpretation. Because of the sequence of operations by which the Judges and Witnesses are obtained, there are only eight possible Judges – Acquisitio, Amissio, Fortuna Major, Fortuna Minor, Populus, Via, Conjunctio, Carcer – and each of these Judges has a possible eight combinations of Witness, this figure being doubled due to the fact that each Witness may stand on either right or left of the Judge. Altogether, therefore, there are 128 possible configurations of Judge and Witnesses, each of which can be an answer to one of 16 questions.

Methods of divination to be considered in succeeding articles are far more complex. In the *I Ching*, for example, there are 64 basic figures; while in the use of the Tarot cards there are a minimum of 22 cards, which may be disposed in an almost infinite variety of ways.

How effective is the I Ching *as a method of divination today? See page 1926*

Murder by moonlight

Close examination of the Bible yields evidence of an attempt to suppress an ancient tradition of Moon worship. STAN GOOCH argues the remarkable hypothesis that dim but potent echoes of this religion still persist

WHAT WAS THE NATURE of the old religion that was supplanted by Judaism? We have seen that it was probably a fertility religion in which worship of the Moon played an important part (see page 1876). This is strongly implied by certain evidence from the Bible. A new religion generally suppresses those elements of the religion it supplants that it cannot absorb, and the fact that the number 13 appears to have undergone a considerable purging from the Old Testament suggests that 13 may have had some significance in the old religion. Thirteen is the number of houses in the Moon zodiac – it is the number of full or new Moons in the solar year – and is therefore of central importance in Moon worship.

There are passages in the Old Testament that make it clear that a flourishing tradition of Moon worship existed alongside Judaism. In Isaiah 1:13-14, for example, God, speaking through the prophet, says:

> Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination to me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting.
> Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them.

And in Hosea 2:11, speaking of the iniquitous state of Judaism, he says:

> I will also cause all her mirth to cease, her feast days, her new moons, and her sabbaths, and all her solemn feasts.

Turning to what at first seems to be entirely different evidence, there are some important connections between the numbers 7 – which retains an important place in the Bible – and 13, which has been largely purged. Seven is the midpoint between 1 and 13:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13

Midpoints are extremely important in all occult thought – midnight, the midwinter solstice, midsummer's day, for instance. The main origins of this general concern about midpoints are probably midwinter (will the slain Sun live again this year?) and midnight (will the hidden Sun come back to us once more?).

The midpoint between one and seven is four, thus:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Multiplying the two mid-numbers and 13 itself together, $7 \times 4 \times 13$, gives 364 – the number of days in a full year – or almost. The number we need is 365 – and this is why, Robert Graves tells us, ancient legends refer not to a year, but to a year and a day (364 + 1). There is more: the number of quarters of the Moon, $4 \times 7 = 28$; and 28, is of course, the average length of the female menstrual cycle.

Ancient Egyptian tombs, dating back to around 3000 BC, contain some very curious magical implements or 'chess boards'. On these boards there is room only for the pieces themselves – none for moving them. There are always either 7 or 13 pieces along each

side of the board – 49 or 169 pieces altogether – and, more significant, the pieces themselves are always in the shape of half-moons. Osiris, to whose cult these items belong, was one instance of a 'Horned God', and his sister Isis was a 'Horned Goddess' (see page 1875). But Robert Graves tells us that Isis was not originally the sister of Osiris but his mother, and that she ruled before him.

The American researcher James Vogh, aware that there might be a Moon zodiac of greater antiquity than the familiar Sun zodiac, set out to discover the thirteenth sign of the Moon zodiac. He found it to be Arachne, the Cretan spider goddess. One of his major pieces of evidence was a mosaic zodiac from a Jewish gnostic synagogue, Beth Alpha, in the Jezreel Valley in Israel. It is clear that this has been altered from a 13-house to a 12-house zodiac. In the middle sits a spider-like figure, Arachne, with 13 items in her headdress and the crescent Moon on her left shoulder.

Vogh also became fascinated by the many ancient legends in which threads are used to lead people out of labyrinths, and their connections with spiders' webs – and, via them, with the spider goddess Arachne. One of the most important labyrinths of the ancient world was that of Knossos, which flourished with the Minoan civilisation around 2500 BC. At the centre of the labyrinth was said to live the strange creature known as the Minotaur, the offspring of a bull and of the wife of Minos, the king of Crete, herself the daughter of the Moon. Vogh took the name *Minotaur*, split it and reversed the order of the pieces. He now had *taur* and *min* – with the *o*, he conjectured, perhaps representing the Moon. From this and other evidence, advanced in his book *Arachne rising: the thirteenth zodiac* (1977), he deduces that the sign of Arachne must originally have fallen between the two consecutive signs of Taurus and Gemini.

Many lines of evidence suggest that the spider goddess, the Moon goddess, and the universal earth mother – who seems to have made her appearance somewhat later than these two – are one and the same. But perhaps of more immediate importance is Vogh's suggestion that the many instances of pre-Christian crosses are actually stylised spiders. The variant of the cross we call the swastika is perhaps the most literally suggestive of the spider; and Vogh has many spider amulets from North America with a cross in a circle drawn upon their backs.

Top: a spider's web, symbol of delusion and captivity. Researcher James Vogh believes he has discovered the thirteenth sign of the Moon zodiac – that of the spider goddess Arachne, shown at the centre of a zodiac from the gnostic synagogue at Beth Alpha (above)

Left: the Immaculate Conception, by Murillo (1617–1682). The Virgin Mary is traditionally shown trampling a crescent Moon. Could this be an indication that Christianity superseded a religion of Moon worship?

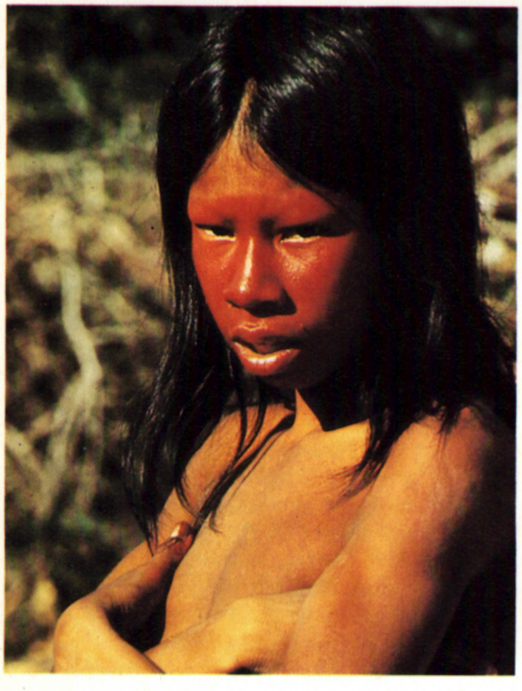
Baleful Moon dew

As previously mentioned, Moon and menstruation are derived from the same root, and scientific study has shown that the Moon is closely related to the female menstrual cycle. A menstruating woman is a fertile woman, and few things were more important to ancient peoples than a regular supply of new babies to ensure the continued existence of the tribe. Women also apparently dream more at menstruation than at other times, but in any case the connections between menstruation and mysticism are legion. Robert Graves tells us that 'the baleful moon dew of the witches of Thessaly was a girl's first menstrual blood taken during an eclipse of the moon.' The sabbath, both the Christian and the witches' version, was originally the festival of the Moon goddess's menstruation. All early peoples – Europeans, Asians, North

and South American Indians, Africans and Australian Aborigines – believed that the red soil found throughout the world was the blood of the Moon goddess shed when giving birth to the planet Earth. This red soil is everywhere regarded as a magical substance. Some authors have seen among its various descendants the ash of Ash Wednesday, and the 'red powder' that, in many folk tales from all over Europe, could turn base metals into gold or silver.

It seems much more likely, however, that this belief is a confused memory of the sacrificial blood and the menstrual blood of women, and the goddess who turned the dead land of winter into the gold of summer and autumn. The so-called noble metals of the alchemists, gold and silver, do happen also to be the colours of the Sun and Moon.

In summary, it seems we have evidence of a garbled and distorted memory of a religion



Above: a carving of the ancient fertility goddess, known as a Sheila-na-gig, being seduced by the Lord of the Underworld, on the porch of the church of St Mary, Whittlesford, Cambridgeshire. Fertility is immensely important in all primitive societies – the face of this Brazilian girl (left) has been smeared with red ochre to ensure her fertility; it is a symbol of the blood that, her tribe believes, was shed by the Earth mother when she was giving birth to the Earth. In his book *The white goddess*, Robert Graves (below) argues that the idea of a fertility goddess pre-dates notions of male gods – and the Moon is perhaps the oldest fertility goddess

of enormous antiquity – a fertility religion in which worship of the Moon played a central part.

Let us now turn our attention to a number of legends and fairy tales.

The story of Sleeping Beauty is as follows. A great king invites 12 good fairies to attend the christening of his daughter. Each bestows a blessing on the child. But a thirteenth, evil, fairy, who has not been invited, now appears and curses the child with death if she should ever prick her finger. Despite all precautions, she does, and falls into a permanent sleep. All around her, the castle and its lands also fall dead. One day, however, a brave knight finds his way to the castle, and at his kiss the princess and her lands come once again to life.

King Arthur of Britain has in his castle a round table at which he sits with his 12 most favoured knights – a total of 13. All the knights are loyal except the rebellious and traitorous Mordred. While Arthur is absent, Mordred usurps the kingdom and marries Guinevere, Arthur's wife. On Arthur's return, he and Mordred fight, and deal each other mortal wounds. Arthur is said not to be dead, however, but only sleeping. One day he will awake and return to lead his people once more.

In Scandinavian mythology, the story of the death of Balder, the most loved of the gods, is as follows. A banquet is held in Valhalla to which 12 of the gods have been invited. While the feast is in progress Loki, the spirit of strife and mischief, who has not been invited, nevertheless turns up as the thirteenth guest. He gives blind Hoder an arrow of mistletoe, and gets him to shoot it. It kills Balder. In the Saxon version of the story, Balder is resurrected, and the golden age of mankind begins.

The story of Christ's crucifixion is this. Christ leads a band of 12 disciples – making a band of 13 altogether. Christ is betrayed by a

Further reading

Michael Baigent, Richard Leigh and Henry Lincoln, *The holy blood and the Holy Grail*, Jonathan Cape 1982

Stan Gooch, *Guardians of the ancient wisdom*, Fontana 1979

James Vogh, *Arachne rising: the thirteenth sign*, Granada 1977

King Arthur and Mordred fight their battle to the death (above left); Loki incites the blind Hoder to kill Balder (above right); the Sleeping Beauty is awakened by a kiss (left); and Christ is betrayed by Judas (below left). In all these stories, the 'best' or most beloved member of a group is killed by the weakest – but comes to life again, heralding a period of joy and well-being. These stories may all mirror the drama of the natural year, in which, in the short or 'weak' lunar month – at the winter solstice – the Sun is 'betrayed' and 'dies', only to come to life again, bringing summer and plenty

Below: the seal of the English Templars, bearing the device of the crescent Moon – the beginning, and perhaps the end, of the mysteries unravelled in the 1982 bestseller *The holy blood and the Holy Grail*

weak and treacherous member of the group, Judas, and is executed. Nevertheless, two days later he has risen from the dead. Christ's death and resurrection signal redemption for mankind and the promise of eternal life.

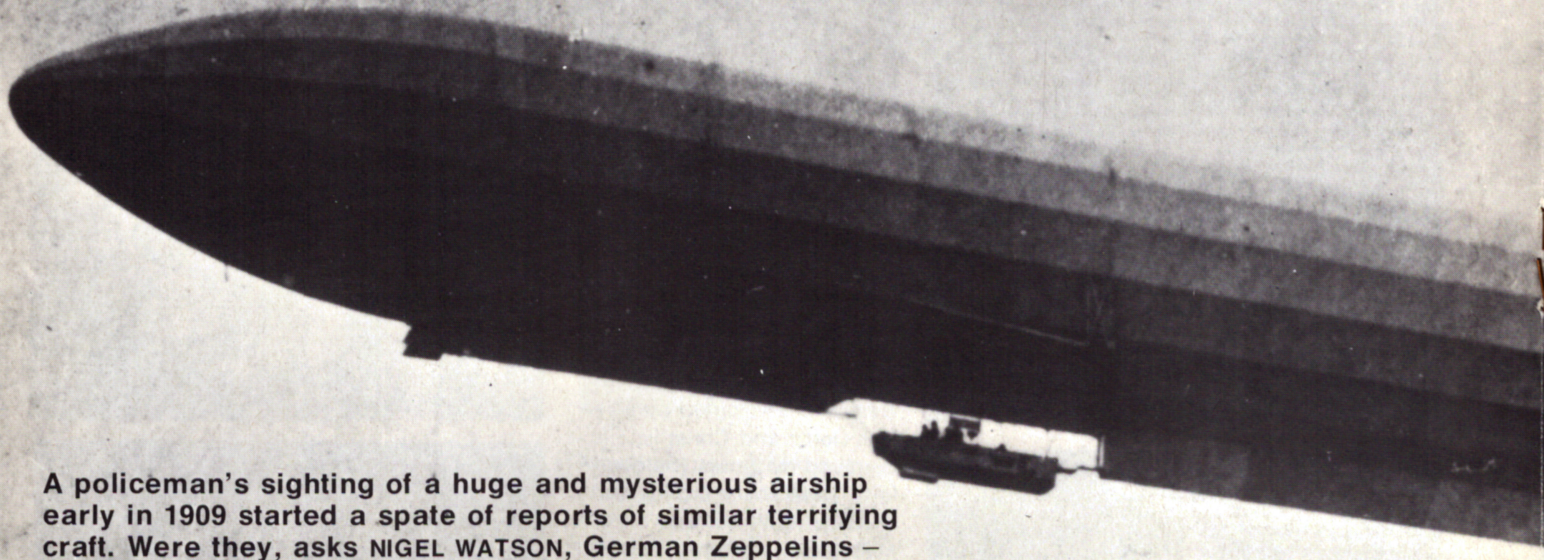
The parallels in these stories are obvious. In each of them, the most beloved is killed by the one evil or weak member of a group of 13. The most beloved dies and desolation follows. But the most beloved comes to life again, and all will be well once more.

It seems clear that these stories are all metaphorical representations of the cycle of the year. They are all the story of the Sun who is killed each year by the Moon, but is then immediately resurrected by her to bring another golden summer. The Moon year contains only twelve and a half complete cycles of the Moon. The thirteenth lunar month is therefore short and 'weak'. It is in this 'weak' month that the Sun dies.

Confirmation of this interpretation comes from the Saxon version of the Balder story, where Balder and Hoder die fighting for the hand of the virgin Moon. Moreover, in Scandinavian mythology Balder is the 'god of the summer sunlight', whereas Hoder represents 'darkness and winter'.

The authors of *The holy blood and the Holy Grail* are quite emphatic that Mary Magdalene's role in the Bible story has been heavily censored (see page 1823) – and I entirely agree with them. I go further however: I believe she is the representative of a cult of Moon worship, and that the story of Christ's crucifixion is the story of a ritual killing, a confused relic of a time when sacrifice of the king was believed necessary to ensure the continued fertility of the land and tribe. The Priory of Sion, for whose existence Michael Baigent, Richard Leigh and Henry Lincoln argue so persuasively, is the guardian of this ancient tradition of Moon worship – very old, very powerful and still flourishing to this day right at the centre of Western civilisation.

The British scareship invasion



A policeman's sighting of a huge and mysterious airship early in 1909 started a spate of reports of similar terrifying craft. Were they, asks NIGEL WATSON, German Zeppelins – or were they something much stranger?

IN THE EARLY MONTHS of 1909 an aerial horror began to haunt the imaginations of the British people. The first sighting of a phantom airship to have a major impact on the public consciousness was made by a Cambridgeshire policeman, PC Kettle. He was patrolling Cromwell Road in Peterborough on the morning of 23 March when he heard the sound of a distant motor car. As he continued to 'hear the steady buzz of a high power engine' he suddenly realised that the noise was coming from above. On looking up he saw a bright light attached to a long oblong body outlined against the stars. This strange aerial object crossed the sky at a high speed, and was soon lost from sight.

News of this sighting was met with a certain amount of scepticism. Nevertheless, it set the pattern for future 'airship' watchers: reports from people who had seen bright, powerful lamps or searchlights attached to dark bodies making a noisy passage across the night sky soon became numerous. Another common feature of such stories was the happy habit of many self-proclaimed experts of submitting explanations for such marvellous visions. In the case of PC Kettle's sighting, a Peterborough police officer announced to the press that a 'very fine kite flying over the neighbourhood of Cobden Street' had been the cause. The bright light was easily explained as a Chinese lantern that had been attached to the kite.

'But how about the matter of the airship going at a tremendous pace?' asked a reporter.

'Oh, that was a little poetic touch on Kettle's part for the benefit of you interviewers. He did not officially report that, and the wind driving the kite would give the impression of movement,' replied the officer.

'But how do you get over the whirring and beating of engines?' asked the still puzzled reporter.

'Oh, that,' responded the officer, as he went to take his leave, 'was the motor which goes all night in the Co-operative Bakery in Cobden Street!'

This bland dismissal of PC Kettle's observation might have carried more weight if it had been released soon after the sighting.

Above: an early dirigible, the Zeppelin Mark 2, in flight over Lake Constance in April 1909. The same year, there was a spate of mystery airship sightings throughout Britain. Many people believed that the aircraft were German Zeppelins making reconnaissance flights in preparation for an invasion of Britain – but German airships were far too unreliable for it to be possible to employ them on such a dangerous mission

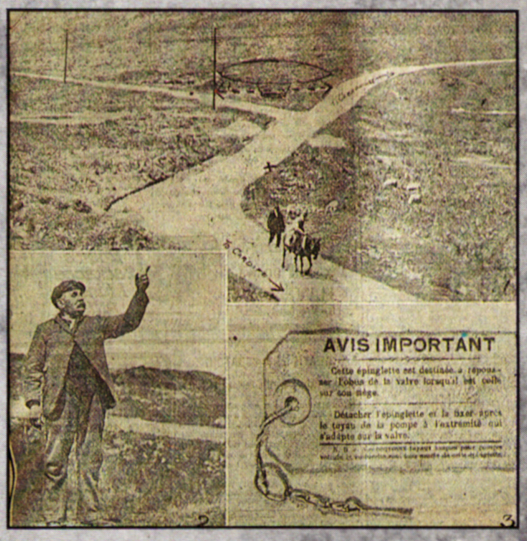
Below: Cromwell Road, Peterborough, the site of the first 'scareship' sighting

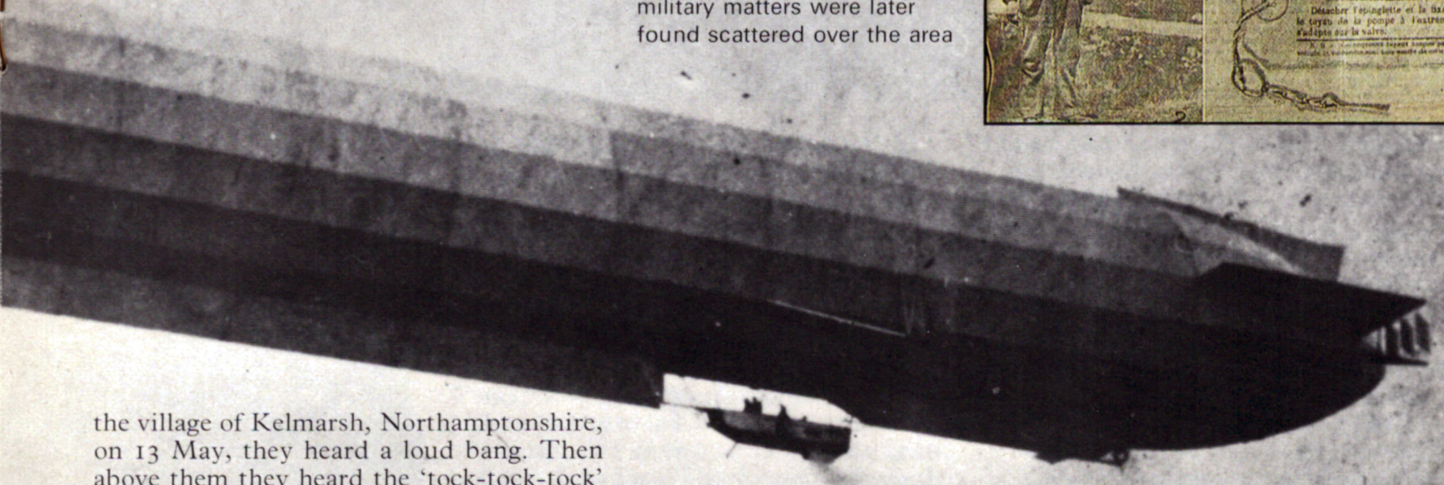
Instead, it took the Peterborough police at least six weeks to arrive at this simple answer to the mystery of the airship. It seems they preferred to imply that PC Kettle was a simpleton who could not distinguish between a kite and an airship, rather than to see the Peterborough police force implicated in giving credence to such an unlikely story.

At first PC Kettle's observation seemed an isolated occurrence. But around the beginning of May sightings began to be reported daily throughout south-east England. A typical report was made by a Mr C. W. Allen. As he and some friends were driving through the village of Kelmarsh, Northamptonshire, on 13 May, they heard a loud bang. Then above them they heard the 'tock-tock-tock' sound of a motor engine. Although the sky was dark they were able to see a 100-foot (30-metre) long torpedo-shaped airship that carried lights fore and aft. It was moving swiftly, but this did not prevent the witnesses seeing a platform suspended beneath the craft, which appeared to contain its crew. The airship disappeared in the direction of Peterborough.

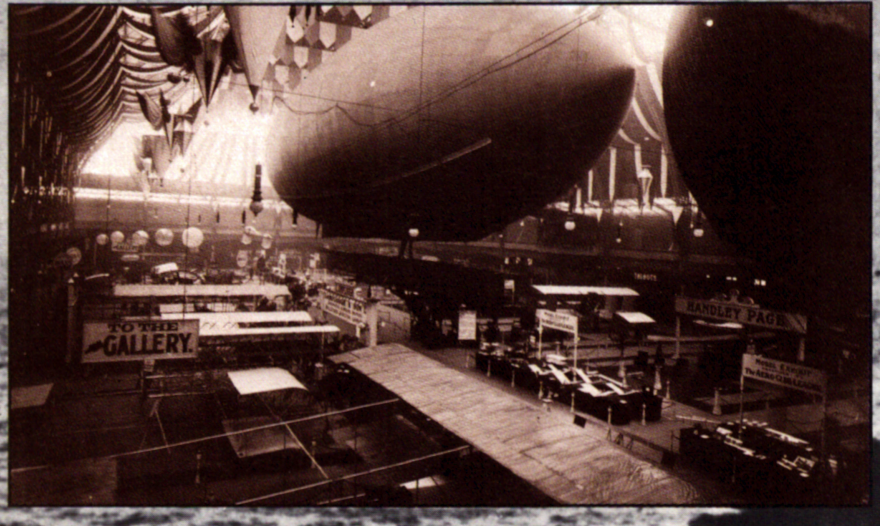
There were many more such reports. But what were the aircraft? The fact that the exploits of Count Zeppelin were well-known in Britain (see box), combined with the antagonism between Germany and Britain, soon led people to believe that German airships were making a reconnaissance in preparation for a future invasion.

Right: a clipping from the Cardiff *Evening Express and Evening Mail* of Wednesday, 19 May 1909 describes a sighting of the mystery airship made by Mr C. Lethbridge on 18 May on Caerphilly Mountain. Mr Lethbridge saw a huge 'long, tube-shaped object' lying on the grass at the side of the road. Newspaper cuttings relating to airship sightings and to German military matters were later found scattered over the area





Below: the Wellman airship at the Aero Show of 1909. Prior to the First World War, Britain devoted very little research to airships; government construction was begun in 1907, but at the outbreak of war in 1914 only five British ships had been built



The major flaw in the hypothesis, however, was the sheer number of airship sighting reports, which came from all regions of Britain. At the time, Germany barely had the resources to make even one or two reconnaissance flights over Britain. For this reason, a few newspapers were prepared to discount the entire phenomenon as imaginary, and sent readers who had reported airship sightings to what they picturesquely called 'lunacy experts'. From one expert, they received this diagnosis:

> In every thousand men there are always two every night who see strange matters – chromatic rats, luminous owls, moving lights, fiery comets, and things like those. So you can always get plenty of evidence of this sort, particularly when you suggest it to the patient first.

The most puzzling and sensational sighting was made by an elderly Punch and Judy showman, Mr C. Lethbridge. With this report, made on 18 May, the focus for the airship's activities shifted from the east coast to mid Glamorgan, Wales. By now there were well-attested reports of a 'long-shaped

A phantom fleet?

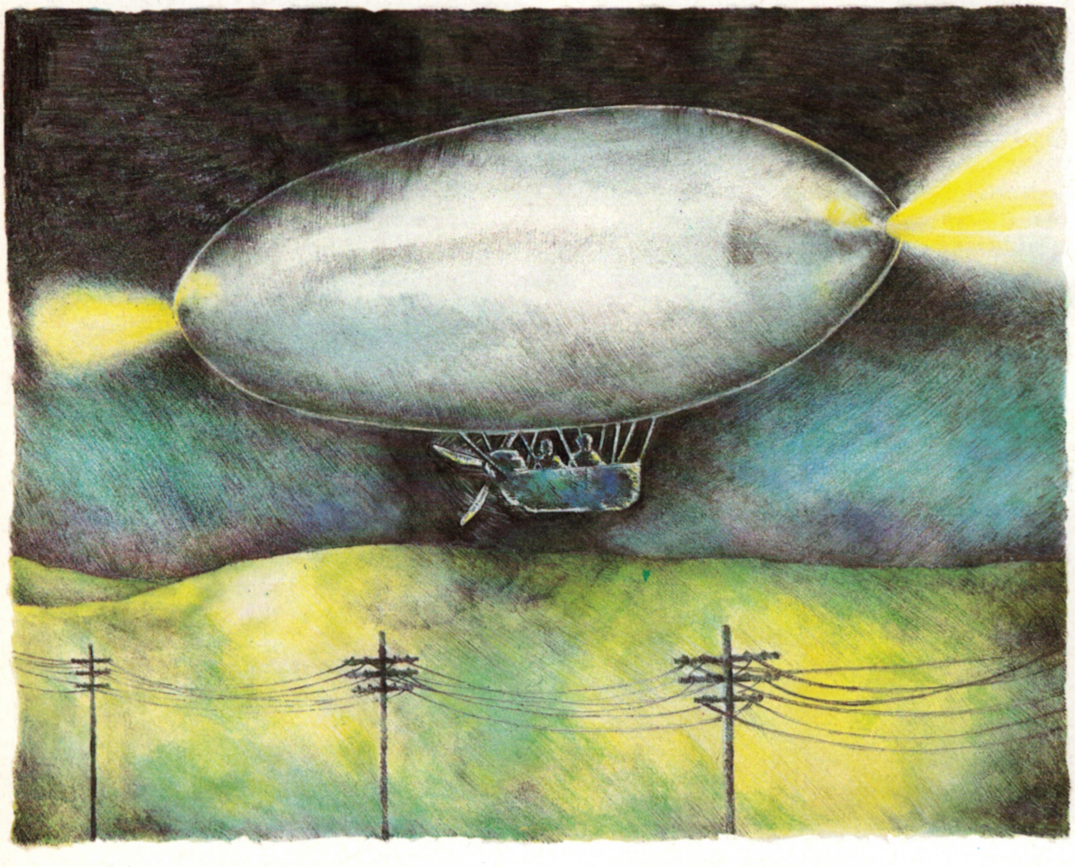
Could the mysterious airships seen over Britain during 1909 have been German Zeppelins? It seems unlikely.

The pioneer of German airship research was Count Ferdinand von Zeppelin (right), who launched his first dirigible, the *Luftschiff Zeppelin 1* – or *LZ1* – over Lake Constance in July 1900, shortly before his sixty-second birthday. *LZ1*, simply an enormous bag filled with gas and propelled by an engine, remained in the air for just over 17 minutes – but its short flight was impressive, and the future of airships seemed bright.

Count Zeppelin set in motion an ambitious airship-building programme, but by 1909, owing to a number of crashes and shortage of money, there were only three working Zeppelins in existence – the *LZ3*, rebuilt from an earlier airship that had crashed, the *LZ5* and the *LZ6*. Of these, only two, the *LZ3* and the *LZ5*, were in the hands of the army – and they were very much in their experimental stages, and certainly not capable of long and hazardous journeys, or of carrying out the high-speed manoeuvres reported by the witnesses of the British 'scareships'.

object' with red flashing lights seen over Belfast, Ireland, on 17 May, and there seemed to be no area of Britain left unaffected by the scare. A few hours after his sighting – which amounted to a close encounter – Mr Lethbridge told inquisitive reporters:

> Yesterday I went to Senghenydd and proceeded to walk home over Caerphilly Mountain. You know that the top of the mountain is a very lonely spot. I reached it about 11 p.m., and when turning the bend at the summit I was surprised to see a long, tube-shaped affair lying on the grass at the roadside, with two men busily engaged with something nearby. They attracted my close attention because of their peculiar get-up; they appeared to have big, heavy fur coats and fur caps fitting tightly over their heads. I was rather frightened, but I continued to go on until I was within twenty yards [18 metres] of them and then my idea as to their clothing was confirmed. The noise of my little spring-cart seemed to attract them and when they saw me they jumped up and jabbered furiously to each other in a strange lingo – Welsh or something else; it was certainly not English. They hurriedly collected something from the ground, and then I was really frightened. The long thing on the ground rose up slowly. I was standing still all the time, quite amazed, and when it was hanging a few feet off the ground the men jumped into



Left: the 'scareship' seen by Mr C. Lethbridge on Caerphilly Mountain on 18 May 1909 'rose in the air in a zig-zag fashion' and sailed away towards Cardiff

Right: Ham Common, on the outskirts of London. Here, on the night of 13 May 1909, a Mr Grahame and a Mr Bond saw a remarkable airship whose pilots, whom they described as a Yankee and a German, apparently steered their craft by pulling beer handles

Right: the village of Kelmarsh, Northamptonshire where, on 13 May 1909, a Mr C. W. Allen saw a 100-foot (30-metre) airship moving swiftly north-eastwards

Below: a cartoon published in *Punch* of 26 May 1909. The cartoon shows a sea serpent staring glumly at a headline in the *Daily Scare*: 'Mysterious air-ship seen everywhere by night' – and commenting, 'Well, if this sort of thing keeps on, it'll mean a dull August for me'

a kind of little carriage suspended from it, and gradually the whole affair and the men rose in the air in a zig-zag fashion. When they had cleared the telegraph wires that pass over the mountain, two lights like electric lamps shone out, and the thing went higher into the air and sailed away towards Cardiff.

When Mr Lethbridge, accompanied by reporters, returned to the site where he had his encounter, they found several traces of the airship's presence. The ground where the 45-foot (14-metre) long object had been seen was churned up as though by a plough-share. All over the area they discovered a quantity of newspaper cuttings of accounts of airship sightings and references to the German emperor and army. Along with these items they found a large quantity of papier-mâché packing material, a lid from a tin of metal polish, a few dozen pieces of blue paper bearing strange writing, and a metal pin with a red label attached to it. The label of the pin carried instructions in French and excited attention when some commentators thought that it was part of an explosive device, but further enquiry showed it probably to have been a valve plunger for a motor car tyre.

Several witnesses came forward to support Lethbridge's story. In Salisbury Road, Cathays, Cardiff, residents said that on the same evening, between 10.40 and 10.50 p.m., they saw an airship-like object in the air.

Cigar-shaped 'boat'

Additional testimony came from workers on Cardiff docks who, two hours after Lethbridge's encounter, saw a fast moving 'boat of cigar shape' flying from the direction of Newport, and going eastwards. The airship carried two lights, and its engines made a loud whirring noise. One witness said, 'We could not see those on board. The airship was too high up for that at night, but it was plain that it was a big airship.'

Two gentlemen, a Mr Grahame and a Mr Bond, made some even more extravagant claims, to the effect that they had seen a 200- to 230-foot (60- to 70-metre) long airship 'like a collection of big cigar boxes with the ends out' on Ham Common, London. The occupants of the craft, whom they met on the night of 13 May, they described as a clean-shaven Yankee and a German who smoked a calabash pipe. The German asked for some tobacco, which Mr Grahame supplied out of his own pouch. Although they were blinded by a searchlight that played on their faces, the witnesses were able to see that the 'Yankee' was positioned in a kind of wire cage, and in front of him he had a row of levers similar to draught beer pump handles. In front of the German was positioned a map with pins dotted all over it. The encounter apparently came to an abrupt end when the 'Yankee' pulled one of the levers down, 'and then he switched the light off, and the aeroplane went without either of the men saying good-bye.'

With such a variety of bizarre reports, it is hardly surprising that the mystery of the phantom scareship that plagued Britain in 1909 has proved difficult to solve.

On page 1938: more sightings – and parliamentary questions are asked

A touching story

Stroking, pummelling, twisting and massaging – many kinds of touch and manipulation are used in both orthodox and unorthodox therapies. RUTH WEST scrutinises the part that touch plays in healing

A PREMATURE BABY lying in an incubator will put on weight more rapidly if it has a sheepskin, and not an ordinary sheet, to lie on. An asthma sufferer given regular massage ceases to have any serious asthma attacks. An emotionally disturbed teenager cradled by people of his own age and gently rocked in their arms is calmed by this experience of being securely held. What do these three cases have in common? The application of the idea that touch is in itself therapeutic. It may be that underlying some of the alternative therapies are an intuitive use and understanding of the healing value of touch.

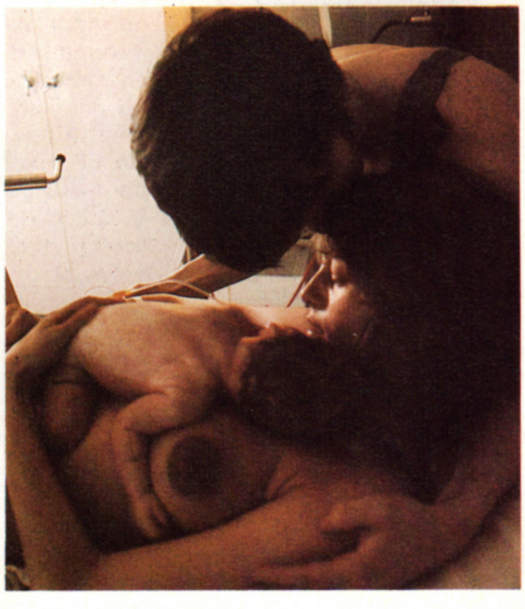
Since the 1940s evidence has built up showing that it is of fundamental importance to healthy physical and emotional development to be touched a great deal, especially during the first stages of life. Without adequate tactile stimulation in infancy many physical and behavioural disorders can develop, and such stimulation may in fact be a primary human need.

Classic experiments suggesting that this is so were carried out by Professor Harry Harlow in the 1950s, working with rhesus monkeys. He found that monkeys deprived of contact with a warm, loving mother during their infancy were seriously impaired in their later emotional development.

The anthropologist Ashley Montagu goes one step further back: to the process of birth itself. He suggests that if there is inadequate stimulation of the skin during labour – as in Caesarean or very rapid births – then the infant is inadequately prepared for the period immediately after birth. Respiration, circulation, digestion, elimination and the nervous and endocrine systems are all activated by the prolonged uterine contractions of labour, he believes. He cites studies of Caesarean-born children showing that more disorders and diseases occur among them, and that they have a mortality rate two or three times higher than in ordinary deliveries.

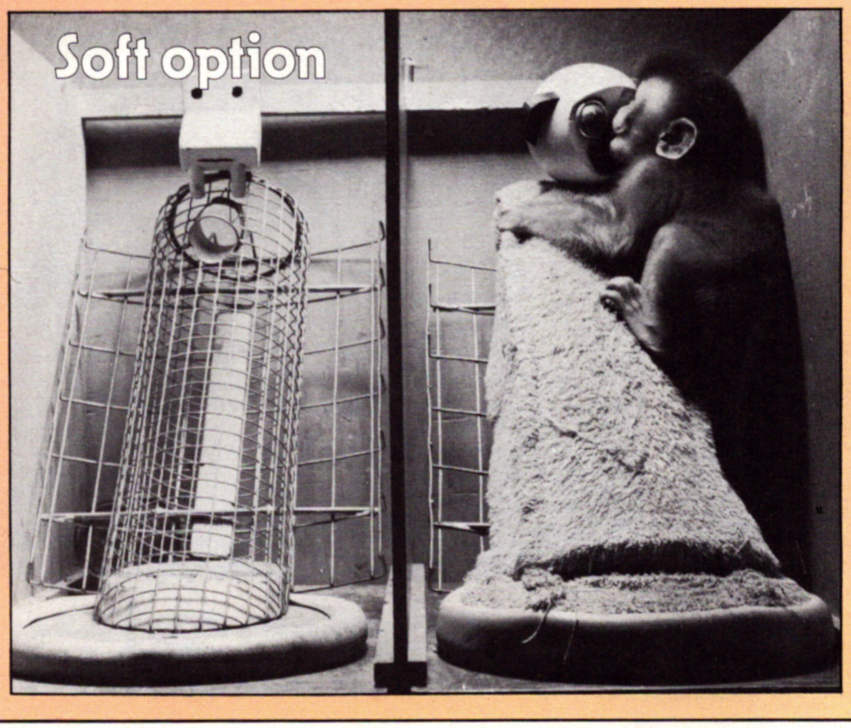
An American behavioural scientist, Dr Donald Barron, studied goat kids delivered by Caesarean section. He found that those that were rubbed dry after birth seemed to be partly compensated for the lack of stimulation during birth. They got up on their legs and prepared to face the world more quickly than those who were not so treated.

Alexander Lowen has attributed schizophrenia to a lack of body contact, leading to failure to establish a sense of personal identity. And there are a number of accounts of breakthroughs being achieved when schizophrenic patients experience warm, human bodily contact. And, of course, there is no



Above: a healer at work with a patient. The rapport between the two is nurtured by gentle touch – a 'laying on of hands' that seems to stimulate the body's own healing powers

Right: parents with their new-born child. Advocates of natural childbirth stress the importance of cuddling and hugging for healthy development



The importance to an infant monkey of its mother's touch was studied in the 1950s by an American behavioural scientist, Harry Harlow. In one series of experiments a monkey was brought up in a cubicle with two 'surrogate mothers' (left). One was a cylindrical frame of bare wire, of such a size that the infant could easily cling to it. The other was similar except that it was covered with soft towelling.

In some of the experiments only one 'mother' dispensed milk through a teat; in others both did so. After only a few days of life with these 'mothers', an infant would choose to spend a high proportion of its time climbing over and clinging to the cloth-covered figure while almost ignoring the one made of bare wire. It would do this even when it received all its milk from the bare wire figure alone. Even making the surrogate mother warmer or giving it the ability to rock the infant did not outweigh the importance of its bodily 'feel'.

lack of informal everyday observation to show us that we make use of touch continually to relieve tension. When no one else is available to soothe us, we resort to comforting ourselves by means of touch: tugging ear lobes, telling the rosary, playing with 'worry beads', scratching the chin and so on.

The wisdom of the body

Suppose that sufficient weight of evidence were to accumulate to persuade researchers to take seriously the idea of touch as therapy – how might it be explained? Ainslie Meares, an Australian psychiatrist, explains the therapeutic value of touch through his theory of 'atavistic regression'. There exists, he says, an instinctive level of functioning in human beings, operating through more primitive parts of the brain, a level on which emotional responses occur and thinking is intuitive and non-verbal. Modern Man has forgotten how to listen to this part of the brain: he relies instead on reasoning to cope with the complexities of the 20th century. But he still has occasional access to it, in moments of relaxation or reverie, when he is less alert and his critical faculties are in abeyance. This 'regression' can lead him to a state of mind where he can listen to the 'wisdom of the body' and put in motion his natural healing processes. And touch is one important way of bringing about this regression. Meares has in fact applied 'atavistic communication by touch', as he calls it, in the treatment of cancer patients. He has obtained some impressive results: in some patients the cancer has disappeared, and the lives of other patients have been prolonged.

However, until Meares can test his theory it remains at the level of speculation – with a scientific status no different from that of the belief that a witch doctor, or Meares himself, has magic powers that 'make people get better' when touched.

It has always been believed that certain privileged individuals could cure the sick by mere touch. It was often the monarch who was thought to have this gift – but sometimes it was a commoner, such as Valentine Greatrakes (below), of County Waterford in Ireland, 'famous for curing several Deseases and distempers by the stroak of his Hand only'

This is not to dismiss Meares's ideas. Others have pointed to the primitive brain as having a wisdom of its own. For example, the French obstetrician Michel Odent, an advocate of 'natural' childbirth, emphasises that

> the woman in labour needs first to forget what she has learned, forget what is cultural, to change her conscious level, to become instinctive, and it's easier if she has close contact during the first stage, especially with someone familiar.

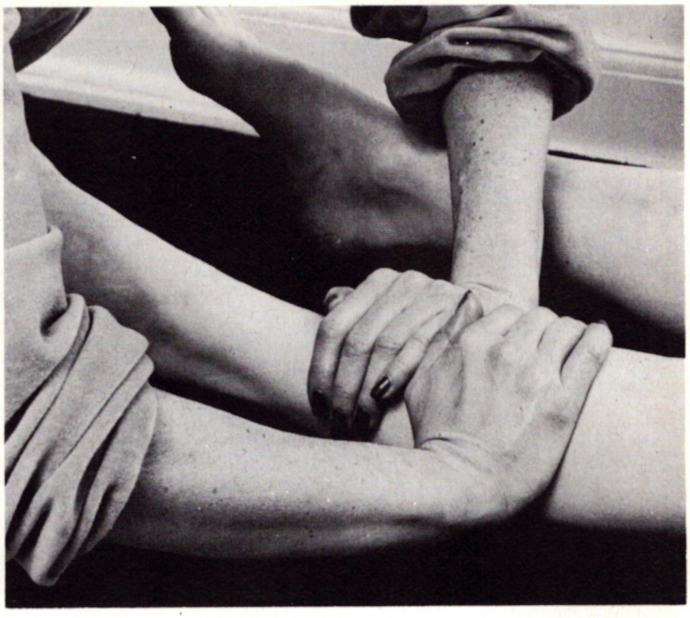
But the problem remains of how to put such ideas into a testable form.

An alternative way of explaining the action of touch is to regard it as an example of the placebo effect. This has been defined as

> any therapeutic procedure . . . which has an effect on a patient, syndrome or disease, but which is objectively without *specific* activity for the symptom being treated.

The placebo effect has generally been associated with tricking a patient into feeling better – for example, by giving him a sugar pill while leading him to believe that it is a carefully chosen, appropriate drug. (*Placebo* is the Latin for 'I will please'.) However, the element of trickery is not an essential part of the idea of a placebo, as the definition above implies.

The effect is firmly established. A placebo is likely to produce a 30 to 40 per cent improvement in symptoms in almost any complaint. When a new drug is tested, its effects must be compared with those of a



placebo to see whether its benefits are substantially greater than this.

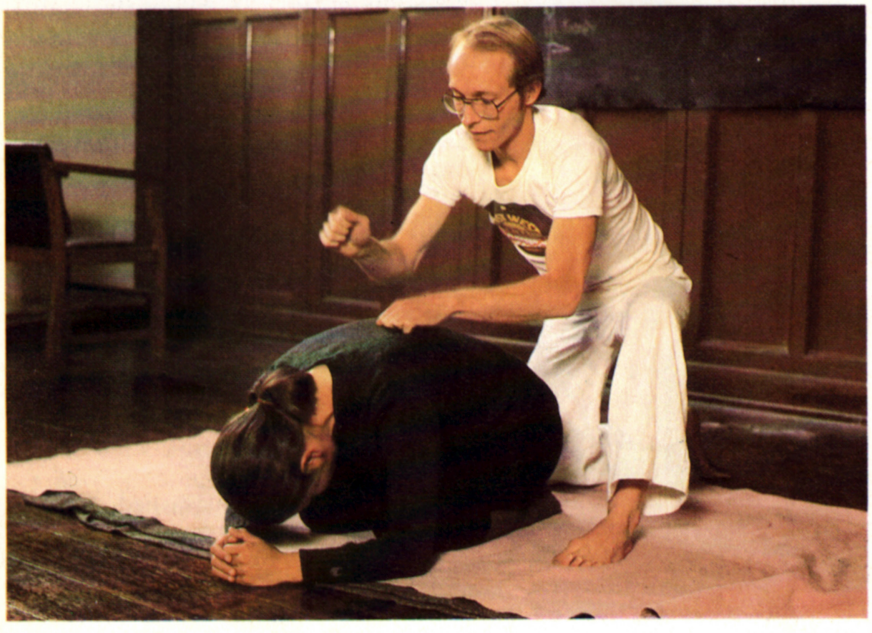
The therapeutic setting has important placebo effects. In one study it was found that patients who talked with a positive, confident anaesthetist before an operation needed only half as much pain-relieving post-operative medication as patients who had not met the anaesthetist.

Herbert Benson, professor of medicine at Harvard Medical School, recommended use of such placebo effects, especially where specific drugs are not clearly indicated for a condition. As he put it: 'Wise physicians recognise that they can often practise an excellent form of medicine by giving a dose of themselves.' He states that this placebo effect is enhanced when the beliefs and expectations of both doctor and patient are positive and when the psychological interaction between doctor and patient is one of firm trust and friendship.

Above left: an osteopath manipulates a patient to relieve tension in the neck. Osteopaths believe that an extraordinarily wide range of disorders can be cured by manipulation

Above right: the value of massage in relaxing muscles is undisputed. But many unorthodox therapists go further and claim that it promotes the flow of beneficial 'vital energies'

Below: *shiatsu* is a massage technique in which firm pressure is applied to certain areas. In general the same sites are important in acupuncture



These conditions are reminiscent of those that Ainslie Meares stipulates as necessary for effective communication by touch:

> First the person touched becomes aware of something of the state of mind of the toucher. For instance, he comes to know if the toucher is anxious or calm . . . understanding or not . . . . Second, the touched one receives a message [that] may be 'I sympathise with you . . . I will stand by you' . . . . Because of the primitive nature of such communication it comes in the form of a vague awareness . . . . The third element . . . is the awakening of primitive psychological processes within the mind of the touched one . . . . In general terms the patient becomes aware that the one touching him is himself profoundly calm and secure. The message that comes is a form of dim awareness that he is being helped. And the reaction evoked in the patient is a regression of psychological and physiological functioning to a simpler level.

Does the technique matter?

Does this mean that when alternative therapies are effective, their success is based upon the placebo effect – initiating and encouraging the operation of the patient's own healing powers with the actual technique of treatment being irrelevant?

There is evidence to indicate that this is not the whole picture. Some has already been discussed in connection with herbal medicine and homoeopathy. To take an example from the range of therapies involving touch, we now discuss the case of chiropractic.

A commission of enquiry appointed by the New Zealand government looked at, among other things, what chiropractors do in the course of treatment. They are normally called upon to deal with localised pain arising

directly from the malfunctioning of spinal joints. Such pain includes back pain, sciatica, headaches and the like. Chiropractors offer a variety of techniques to correct such musculo-skeletal disorders – from a direct thrust, used to reduce a dislocation, to gentler techniques, involving light or heavy pressure on muscles, ligaments and other soft tissues. Indirect approaches to the correction of disorders are also used, which rely on the belief that 'when the body is held in the correct position long enough, it will do for itself what is best for itself.'

The commission concluded in its final report that:

> [although] chiropractors' views on the neurophysiological processes by which [their] results follow often have been scientifically naïve, [it needs] to be understood that the area of spinal mechanics and its implications in neurophysiology has not been explored by orthodox medical science . . . . Chiropractic today cannot lightly be dismissed.

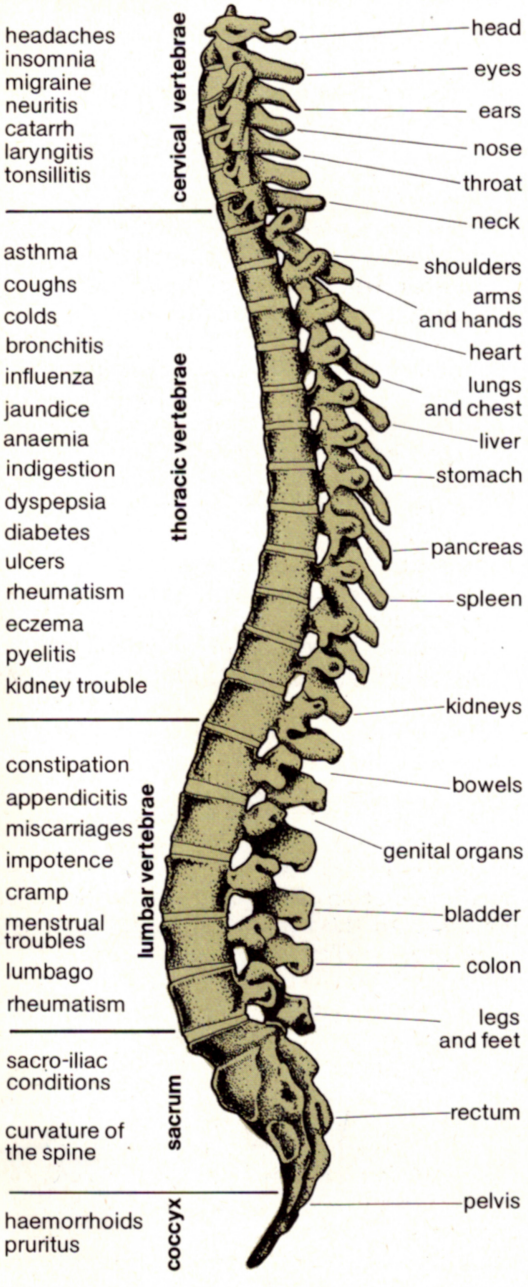
Clinical evidence, too, demonstrates that manipulation or massage of the spine is of benefit.

Some chiropractors, however, do not stop at saying that they can successfully treat musculo-skeletal disorders (type M disorders, as they term them). They claim that they can be of benefit in a wide range of disorders not normally thought of as being caused by a spinal malfunction: organic, visceral disorders (type O disorders), such as high blood pressure, diabetes and the like. If there were already a spinal problem that a conventional doctor would recognise, the commission could accept that its treatment might have a beneficial effect on the functioning of the rest of the body and so relieve symptoms of a type O disorder. But the commission could not accept the more wide-ranging claim – for that would mean that chiropractic is a complete alternative system of medicine.

According to those advocating the therapeutic use of touch, the chiropractors may be correct in claiming to be able to help all kinds of disorders. Where they are wrong is in saying that spinal adjustments are responsible for successful treatment of type O (organic, visceral) disorders. It is rather the use of touch to enhance a patient's own healing processes that brings the successful results.

Perhaps a combination of these opposed views is correct: what alternative medicine offers to the patient is a combination of genuine skill in its own techniques and use of medicines, together with that something extra – communicated through the normal senses or extra-sensorily – that is required to transform beliefs and hopes into bodily changes. We may be witnessing the rebirth of the Asclepian tradition of healing.

Right: a chiropractor manipulates a patient's upper spine. Chiropractic and osteopathy, originally regarded as quite distinct, have come to resemble each other strongly. There are subtle differences in technique however: roughly speaking, chiropractors are likely to use small, sharp thrusts, whereas osteopaths use slow leverage



Left: the spine, and the areas on the body that are controlled by nerve connections to the corresponding parts of the spinal cord. Chiropractors and osteopaths regard these connections as of vital importance to their techniques: a disorder in a certain part of the body may need manipulation of the associated part of the spine

Further reading

Norman Cousins, *Anatomy of an illness*, W.W. Norton (New York) 1979
Bernard Dixon, *Beyond the magic bullet*, Allen and Unwin 1978
Brian Inglis, *Natural medicine*, Fontana 1980

Borley in ruins?

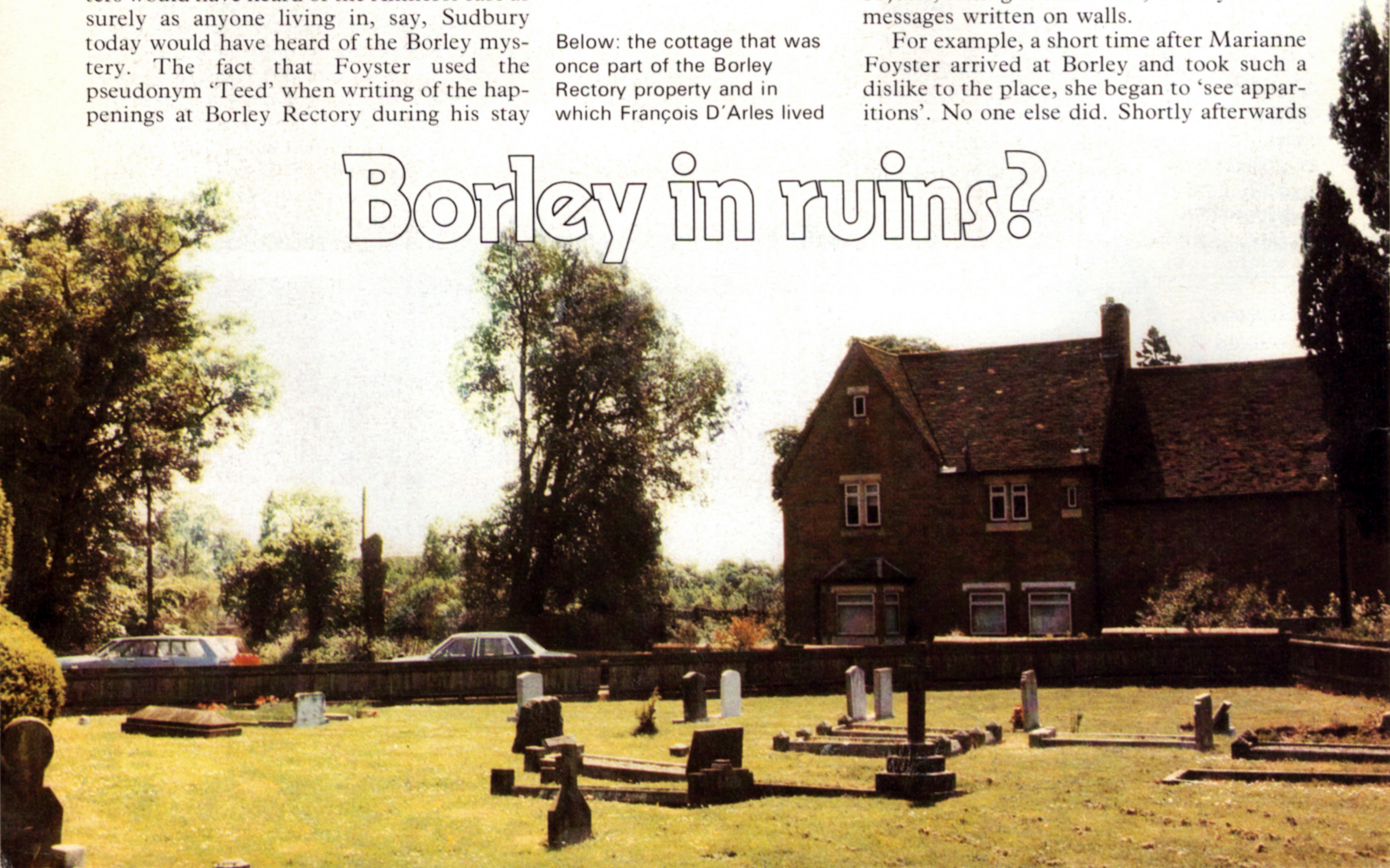
Writing on the walls, bells that ring themselves, apparitions and mysterious fires – such were the non-stop paranormal phenomena that occurred after the Foyster family moved into Borley Rectory. Were they real? FRANK SMYTH continues the saga of Borley

Above: Borley Rectory, which seemed to reach the peak of its haunting when Marianne Foyster lived there. It is still an open question as to whether she created the events herself. If so, was it because she suffered from an hysteric disorder she could not control – like Esther Cox in the similar Amherst case? Or did she produce the phenomena through PK?

IN 1878 A YOUNG WOMAN named Esther Cox became the centre of 'mysterious manifestations' at her sister's home in Amherst, Nova Scotia. Esther saw apparitions visible to no one else. Objects were thrown, furniture was upset, small fires broke out in the house and messages addressed to the girl were found scribbled on the walls. The 'hauntings' became the subject of a book, *The haunted house: a true ghost story . . . the great Amherst mystery* (1879) by Walter Hubbell. The book was a huge success, running through 10 editions and selling over 55,000 copies. But in 1919 the American Society for Psychical Research printed a 'critical study' by Dr Walter F. Prince, suggesting that the Amherst case was not in fact a poltergeist manifestation. Prince said it was all trickery by Esther Cox while in a state of dissociation, or conversion hysteria.

The township of Amherst is about 5 miles (8 kilometres) from the equally small community of Sackville, where another of Esther Cox's married sisters lived and where, 50 years afterwards, the Reverend Lionel Foyster and his wife Marianne lived. The Foysters would have heard of the Amherst case as surely as anyone living in, say, Sudbury today would have heard of the Borley mystery. The fact that Foyster used the pseudonym 'Teed' when writing of the happenings at Borley Rectory during his stay there offers what is tantamount to proof that he not only knew of the Amherst case but was familiar with its details: the unusual name 'Teed' was the married name of Esther Cox's sister. It seems likely, therefore, that his wife also knew of the case, though whether she made deliberate – if unconscious – use of it for her own behaviour is a matter for conjecture. The resemblance between both cases is, in fact, striking; Dingwall, Goldney and Hall in *The haunting of Borley Rectory* offer no less than 19 points of general concurrence, including the ringing of bells, throwing of objects, setting of small fires, and mysterious messages written on walls.

For example, a short time after Marianne Foyster arrived at Borley and took such a dislike to the place, she began to 'see apparitions'. No one else did. Shortly afterwards



Below: the cottage that was once part of the Borley Rectory property and in which François D'Arles lived

the manifestations, so similar to the Amherst case, began. Her husband, loyal and devoted, answered villagers who accused her of faking that he could not see the visions because 'he wasn't psychic', but in her 'defence' he began to keep a rough record of events. This was not perhaps as helpful as he hoped it might be because, as he admitted, much of it was written later and many things were confused.

In October 1931, in answer to a plea from the Bull sisters, Harry Price returned to Borley once more. It is interesting to speculate on the motives behind the Bulls' concern: perhaps because they knew the source of the pranks and hoaxes during their own tenancy, they suspected the genuineness of the new 'haunting'. The same could be said of Harry Price, for he returned from his visit convinced that Mrs Foyster was directly responsible for fraud.

In their examination of the alleged phenomena, Dingwall, Goldney and Hall analysed the incidents described in Foyster's first record, which he later elaborated upon. Treating the constant bell ringing as a single phenomenon, they isolated 103 different instances. Of these, 99 depended totally on Mrs Foyster's sincerity, three were readily attributable to natural causes, and only one was in any way 'inexplicable'.

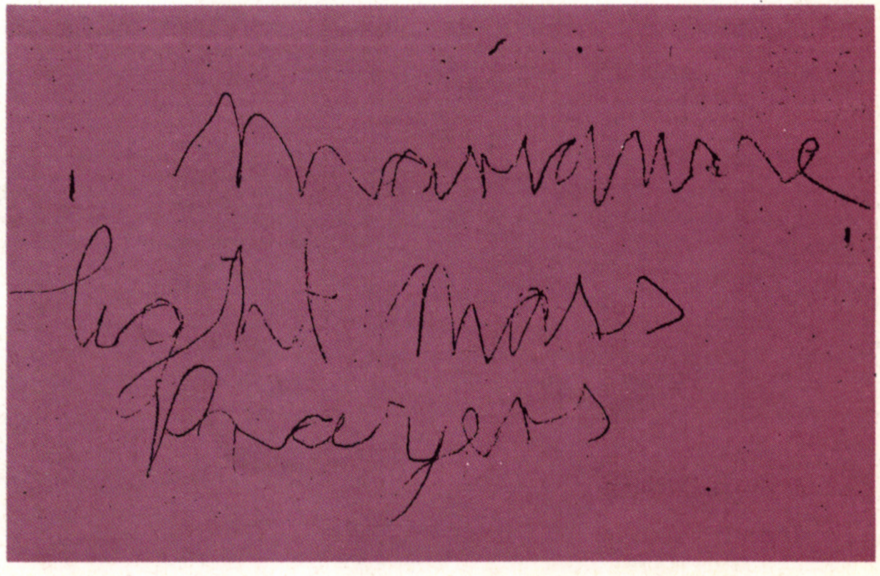
Among the most suspicious incidents was the appearance of pencilled writings on the walls. About seven messages appeared during the Foysters' tenancy, most of them addressed to Marianne and appealing for 'light, mass, prayers'. Another, not noted by Price in his Borley books, spelled 'Adelaide', the name of the Foysters' adopted daughter. All the messages were in a childish scribble. Little Adelaide may have been responsible for one or both of the 'mysterious' small fires that broke out in the rectory, for she was caught on at least one occasion trying to set fire to bedclothes.

In 1933 when the Foysters went on leave for six months, they left Canon H. Lawton as locum. Nothing untoward happened though the canon, like Major Douglas-Home of the Society for Psychical Research, noted the curious acoustics of the house and surroundings. In any case, by that time Mrs Foyster was spending most of her time in London with Francois D'Arles at their flower shop. An exorcism by a group of Spiritualists the previous year, when Marianne and François first left to open their shop, seemed to have put paid to what the Foysters cosily called 'the goblins'. Or was it that Marianne Foyster was no longer on the premises?

In October 1935 the Foysters left Borley. When the Reverend A.C. Henning was appointed five months later, he chose to live elsewhere, and since his time the rectors of Borley have lived at Liston or Foxearth

Below: the ghost hunter Harry Price (left) and Mrs K. M. Goldney of the Society for Psychical Research (right) pose with the Foyster family at Borley Rectory. The Foysters' adopted child Adelaide and an unidentified playmate complete the picture

Bottom: one of several messages that appeared on the walls of the rectory. All of them were scribbled in pencil in a childish hand and were mostly addressed to Marianne Foyster



One of Price's 48 volunteer investigators takes a break from his duties at the rectory. Price rented Borley for a year and gathered a team of 'observers' through an advertisement in *The Times* to work with him there. He did not ask for experience in psychical research, but required his volunteers to have 'leisure and intelligence' and to be 'critical and unbiased'

rectories, parishes amalgamated with Borley since the 1930s.

But the battered, drama-ridden old house had still another four years of life to run. On 19 May 1937 Harry Price rented the rectory, and a week later inserted an advertisement in *The Times* asking for 'responsible persons of leisure and intelligence, intrepid, critical and unbiased' to form a rota of observers at the house. If, he later stated, they 'knew nothing about psychical research, so much the better'.

As has been pointed out by Price's critics, ignorance of psychical research is a curious requirement for a team of ghost hunters, but could make it easier to use their 'experiences' to build a good story.

If Harry Price and Marianne Foyster had used fraud for their own personal ends, another trickster who came on the scene in November 1938 was working for purely financial gain. He was Captain William Hart Gregson, who bought Borley Rectory six months after Price's tenancy expired. He immediately asked Price's advice about organising coach trips to see his new property and broadcast on the radio, recounting several minor 'phenomena'. But his coach tour plans were brought to an abrupt end at midnight on 27 February 1939 when fire gutted the building, leaving only a few walls, charred beams, and chimney stacks standing.

Sidney Glanville, one of Price's volunteer researchers of impeccable reputation, said that at a seance at the Glanville home, an entity named 'Sunex Amures' had threatened to burn down Borley Rectory. But the real cause was flatly stated by Sir William Crocker in his autobiography *Far from humdrum: a lawyer's life* (1967). Crocker, a distinguished barrister, and Colonel Cuthbert Buckle, an insurance adjuster, investigated the claim made by Gregson on behalf of the insurers. Crocker states: 'We repudiated his impudent claim for "accidental loss by fire" . . . pleading that he had fired the place himself.'

'Bare-faced hocus pocus'

The ruins of Borley Rectory were finally demolished in the spring of 1944 and the site levelled. An orchard and three modern bungalows now occupy the spot. During the demolition, Price took a *Life* magazine photographer and researcher Cynthia Ledsham to Borley, and by sheer fluke, the photographer captured on film a brick that was apparently 'levitated' by unseen forces – but was in fact thrown by a worker. *Life* published the photograph over a jokey caption, but Price, in his book *The end of Borley Rectory* (1946), claimed it as a final 'phenomenon'. Cynthia Ledsham was astounded, calling it 'the most bare-faced hocus pocus on the part of . . . Harry Price.'

The truth is that the haunting of Borley Rectory was the most bare-faced hocus pocus from start to finish, with Price feeding his craving for personal publicity from it in the most short sighted way. For, as was shown after his death, his shallow frauds could not hope to withstand investigation.

In a letter to Mr C.G. Glover in 1938, Price wrote: 'As regards your various criticisms, the alleged haunting of the rectory stands or falls not by the reports of our recent observers, but by the extraordinary happenings there of the last 50 years.'

But he wrote to Dr Dingwall in 1946 in reference to the occasion when a glass of water was 'changed' into ink: 'I agree that Mrs Foyster's wine [*sic*] trick was rather crude, but if you cut out the Foysters, the Bulls, the Smiths, etc., something still remains.' It is then logically left that the 'something' is the 'reports of our recent observers'.

As Dingwall, Goldney and Hall said: 'If one wished to dispose of the Borley hauntings on one small piece of paper merely by reference to Price's privately expressed opinions of the evidence', it would be necessary only to quote the two letter extracts in juxtaposition. However, one great irony remains. Despite the demolition of Price's pack of lies, ghost hunters of the 1960s and 1970s doggedly persisted in investigating the area. And they may just have stumbled on something truly paranormal – not at the rectory site, but in Borley church itself.

For the eerie happenings that point to a real haunting at Borley, see page 1954

continued from back cover

Chancellor Moore believes that only a very small proportion of mediumistic communications can be considered as evidence for survival. And ghosts, once commonly considered to be the spirits of the dead, cannot. It seems likely that they are only a kind of videotape playing over and over again.

However, recent research into 'near-death experiences' seems to indicate that the mystics have been right. If the people who reported the experience of hearing themselves declared dead, entering a dark tunnel, meeting beings of light, members of their family and friends in a beautiful place, then hearing themselves called back, had not been resuscitated, it seems probable that the experience would have continued, even though the body died.

Chancellor Moore concluded by stating that there may be in the near future a new view of physics that will explain theoretically how a mind can survive the death of the brain.

The brain's last fling?

In the afternoon session of the conference Dr Susan Blackmore – introduced by chairman Julian Isaacs as 'the SPR's tame sceptic' – talked about the 'evidence' of the near-death experience. The main point to remember, she said, was that the people who reported these experiences were not actually dead when they described the experience.

Perhaps the hundreds of stories recounted by resuscitated patients – on the whole strikingly similar – merely described 'the brain's last fling' as it prepared itself for the trauma of death, the end.

On an uncharacteristically subdued and uncontroversial note, Dr Blackmore summed up by saying she could see only two explanations for the near-death experience – that it really is, as many people believe, a glimpse of what happens after death, or that it is the 'brain's last stand' before the personality dies. 'I know which I believe,' said Dr Blackmore, 'but I know which one most of you will believe. Our knowledge is so very limited that we can't be certain either way.'

Brian Inglis then introduced the vexed subject of reincarnation. He stated at the outset that he is not a convinced believer in reincarnation but that the evidence for it is strong. He proceeded to list the books on the topic that had impressed him, including the 'classics' by Morey Bernstein (see page 54); Albert de Rochas (see page 1330); Joan Grant (see page 1738) and Arthur Guirdham (although his work was unsatisfactory because he steadfastly refused to reveal his sources).

However, by far the most impressive research on reincarnation had, Inglis believes, been carried out in the hypnotic regression sessions of Arnall Bloxham (see page 55) and Joe Keeton, and the scholarly work of Dr Ian Stevenson. Stevenson had investigated hundreds of cases, most of them in India, where young children had spontaneously 'remembered' their past lives. Stevenson had come to the tentative conclusion that, after investigation, these cases seemed 'suggestive of reincarnation'.

Reincarnation revisited

The last speaker of the day was certainly the most confident in expressing his views. Ian Wilson, author of *Mind out of time*, maintained that the evidence for reincarnation is like beautiful countryside seen from afar – underfoot it tends to be considerably less picturesque. Reincarnation, Wilson said, simply doesn't stand up to scrutiny.

He rapidly demolished the famous cases of Keeton and Bloxham. But it was Ian Stevenson's researches that came in for the most blistering attack. He claimed he had done further research on the same cases and they simply 'disintegrated'. Stevenson's agent in India was 'the Ian Paisley of reincarnation' so obviously his reports to Stevenson could hardly be considered objective.

Wilson said that it was disconcerting to note that all the Indian cases concerned the children of extremely poor families who claimed to have been certain members of very rich families. These children were 'obviously coached by their parents in the story of the rich person whom they claim to have been, purely for monetary gain'.

Again, Stevenson's allegedly slapdash research became only too clear when one of a certain couple investigated by Stevenson and declared by him to 'have nothing against their integrity' was discovered to 'have been involved in a fraud case as long as your arm'. QED, one felt.

However, in true SPR tradition, question time was lively. Of the panel of five speakers Ian Wilson was repeatedly singled out to be bombarded with incisive questions. Did he really expect *rich* children to claim previous lives in poor families? Perhaps if there is any truth in the idea of karma then an arrogant, wealthy person could have 'earned' his next life as a beggar. . . . And the man in the fraud case, what exactly had he been accused of? In answering this last question Wilson let slip the information that the man 'had got off'. Chancellor Moore, a lawyer, interjected that in that case the man *did*, as Stevenson had claimed, have 'nothing against his integrity'; if he was found 'not guilty' then he is not guilty.

The day ended with the feeling that most investigators are highly selective in what they present as 'evidence'; sadly for psychical research, it seems that bias is never far away.

Karma in Kensington

'The two matters we are most certain of are the same matters we know least about; our coming into this world and our going out of it. . . .' So said Garth Moore, one of the distinguished speakers who took part in the Society for Psychical Research (SPR) Study Day on the subject of reincarnation and survival, on 22 May 1982.

Julian Isaacs began the conference by presenting the parapsychologists' analysis of the 'evidence for survival'. To most of them the stumbling block was the difficulty in imagining an identity existing without a body.

Isaacs's main preoccupation, however, was to try to apply the highly controversial observational theory to the evaluation of mediumistic 'evidence' for survival. His main problem, as it turned out, was in making the theory intelligible.

Because it is possible that ESP and PK are independent of time, then they could work retroactively; even the moods of the checkers of experiments seem in some cases to have influenced the progress of the experiment itself. The theory doesn't allow us to create a French victory at Waterloo but does allow us to make subtle differences to the past. Similarly, might not the investigators of mediums, who check their material, get the results they want by influencing the course of experiments?

Heads reeling from grappling with this disconcerting theory, the audience turned, no doubt gratefully, to Garth Moore, Chancellor of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. As a priest and a lawyer, he felt he had something to offer to both the religiously inclined and the more sceptical members of the society.

Indeed, as a lawyer, he thought that the evidence showed the probability of survival – but there was no evidence at all for immortality. Even if we survive, it may not be for long. And whereas 'nothing in psychical research proves survival', Christianity, he believes, seems to offer impressive proof of at least one kind of afterlife in the resurrection of Jesus. Moore said: 'Hundreds of people witnessed the risen Christ; to them and to millions of believers – and mystics – an afterlife was a fact and not just a pious hope. God made man in his own image, and as God is a trinity so man is; body, soul and mind. The mind is the action of the soul upon the body, the brain part of the body.'

continued overleaf

From left to right: Brian Inglis, Garth Moore, Susan Blackmore, Julian Isaacs and Ian Wilson